

Missouri Early Successional Community WHAG Model Instructions

Early Successional:

The Early Successional Community WHAG is appropriate for old fields, idle areas or other early successional habitats where the planned tree canopy coverage will be less than 25%.

(1) Shrubby Cover Quantity and Quality:

- Measure the percent of the field that is within 150 feet of usable shrubby cover.
- When completing this form in the office, assume dense woody cover is present in woody draws/fencelines in excess of 30' in width, ungrazed woodland, or where you have personal knowledge of dense woody cover is present or until field verified. Consider existing shrubby cover with fescue or brome underneath unusable space.
- Usable shrubby cover may consist of shrub thickets, briar patches, edge feathering, and/or downed tree structures that are 3' to 12' in height with bareground underneath and at least 1,500 ft² in size.

(2) Grassland Composition:

- To get 10 points a mixed native grass and forb/legume grassland will contain at least two native grass species. A native grass specie must comprise at least 10% of the grassland composition to count as a specie in the mix. Desirable forbs and/or legumes shall comprise 10 to 75% of the canopy coverage to receive the 10 points. A big bluestem and Indian grass hay field with less than 10% or greater than 75% forb or legume canopy coverage would score 2 points. A native grass monotype would score 2 points.
- To qualify as wildlife friendly, 60% of the mix will be dominated by species having a good or excellent wildlife rating (see Table 2, 327 Conservation Cover Std.) to score 7 points. Fields dominated by species rated fair or lower will score lower. Any mixture with more than 25% of a specie rated poor for wildlife automatically drops to the next line.
- The 5 point option would capture fields dominated by species rated fair for wildlife habitat (Table 2, 327 Conservation Cover Std.), or with 25%-40% species rated poor for wildlife.
- An alfalfa or red clover hayfield, with just a smattering of grass, would score 2 points.
- A reed canarygrass, fescue, Bermuda or Old World bluestem monotype would score zero points for existing conditions. Early successional vegetation community WHAG does not apply if plan conditions do not improve fields dominated by species rated poor for wildlife (see Table 2, 327 Conservation Cover Std.).

(3) Desirable Forb/Legume Diversity:

- This includes introduced legumes, native prairie forbs, and most 'weeds' (such as ragweed). Refer to 643, legumes rated good or excellent for wildlife in 327, common quail foods listed in the Missouri Bobwhite Quail Habitat Appraisal Guide (University of Missouri Extension (MP 902)) or contact your Area Biologist.
- It takes a very diverse grassland to exceed 20 species of forbs.

- Noxious weeds, sericea lespedeza, crown vetch, spotted knapweed, poison hemlock and horse nettle should not be included.
- Non-native legumes/forbs would not be considered beneficial in a native prairie (eg. sweet clover or birds foot trefoil in a native prairie or other natural community), while they could be considered desirable in a planted pasture or hayfield. Use best judgment.

(4) Desirable Forb/Legume Canopy Coverage:

- Estimate the percent of the soil surface that is shaded by desirable forbs. If you were able to look at a square meter plot from overhead, estimate the percentage of the plot covered by desirable broadleaf plants.
- Noxious weeds, sericea lespedeza, crown vetch, spotted knapweed, poison hemlock and horse nettle should not be included.

(5) Vegetative Cover:

- Evaluate the percent of herbaceous vegetation in the entire field that is greater than 8 inches tall and the percent bareground (exposed soil) underneath the vegetative canopy.
- Evaluate the field based on how it will appear between May 15 and September 15.
- Dense, rank grass or herbaceous vegetation, such as unmanaged fescue, would score zero points. Do not use Early Successional WHAG if planned conditions will result in this type of vegetative structure.

(6) Period Maintenance:

- If ranking woody draws, woody fencelines, or other similar areas, score 10 points.
- Score based on frequency of disturbances. Fields divided into smaller management units will score higher than treating an entire field at once.
- If the disturbance cycle is greater than 5 years the area being evaluated is not conducive to being managed as early successional habitat.

(7) Introduced Species:

- If any of these species represents 10% or more of the field, score zero points.